

General Tips for Debate:

1. **Write down the motion:** As soon as the motion is revealed, write it down. Get every member of your team to remember it and jot it down on their notebooks or computers (wherever they're taking notes). Trust me, it helps. I was in a debate where my teammate botched the motion and it cost us the round. Writing it down will help you refer to it both in the preparation and debate stage.
2. **Points first, then facts:** I've no idea participants from other countries are taught to prepare their debate, but my teammates always make their points first before finding facts to back it up. I find it far more effective, since finding facts before points sometimes gives you difficulty when trying to find reasoning for why the facts help your team. While we're on the topic of facts...
3. **Find as much factual information as possible:** I cannot stress this enough, I've been in so many rooms as an adjudicator and debater where teams have omitted facts from their entire debate. Facts are a key part of your speech, the opposition team cannot go against them because they are proven rock-solid facts. The more facts you include in your debate, the better.
4. **Share resources with your team:** When you find a great website or resource that you know a teammate could use to back up their points, give it to them. Don't just tell them about it and then move on, send the link to it via email or let them read it from your screen. That way, they can commit the source and fact to memory and be more confident when reciting it during the debate.
5. **If you can find a flaw, don't use it:** Whenever you think of a point, you should always check if it's a good point by analyzing it for any flaws. If your own team can think of rebuttals for that point, then the enemy team will probably find them too. Only use points that you're certain have few or no rebuttals at all. If however, the point has only a few weak rebuttals then..
6. **Nullify rebuttals:** If your point has a few obvious rebuttals that the enemy team is sure to pick up on, then deny them the chance to make those rebuttals by getting to them first. This can be done by finding a fact or point that covers up the flaw and then stating it in the debate. For example, an affirmative point for the motion that Ctronic is fun might be that there's always an element of fun to it. A rebuttal to this point might be that the fun only comes from a few sources. You could then say in your point that "though the enemy team might argue that this fun comes from only a few events, I'd like to oppose that statement by saying that the amount of fun that comes from these sources outweighs the amount of events are fun by a lot." I would not recommend using this tactic if you are a beginner in debate, as it is highly likely the enemy team will turn that pre-rebuttal into a point of their own.
7. **Write rebuttals down as they are said:** I've been in so many debates where my team has a great rebuttal, but because we forgot to write down the exact quoting of the rebuttal, we missed an opportunity to destroy the enemy team. Whenever a rebuttal pops into your mind, write down not only the rebuttal, but also what the opposition speaker said that caused the rebuttal. So for example, instead of writing "no facts to back up point", write down "the ___ speaker provided no

evidence to backup their points, thus we as the affirmative team are left to simply take their word for it”.

8. **Conclude and prelude:** After you’ve made your rebuttals, said your points and given your evidence, you need to end your speech by wrapping up not only what you’ve said; but also what your previous speakers have given to your argument as whole. Adding onto that, introduce what your next speaker will say by quickly mentioning their points. If you wish to add a little flair at the end, be my guest. An example of this would be “In conclusion, I as the first/second/third speaker of affirmative/negative team on the motion that _____ have opened/furthered/developed/ended our argument by stating that _____. Coupled with the points of my team’s previous speakers, that _____, we hope we leave the room in no doubt that/we have developed our case that (insert motion).
9. **Use your hands, not your feet:** Presentation is one of the 3 areas the adjudicator will be assessing you on (along with strategy and content). It is also one of the easiest is nail or mess up. The best way to do either of those is how you use your appendages. Use your hands to help your debate by gesturing with them when the time feels right (your body does this naturally I find). Do not however, use your feet a lot or at all. I’ve seen so many debaters lost points for presentation because they were rocking about or moving around too much. Stay in one spot and remain there for most of your debate, don’t rock back and forth or move around too much. Yes it’s acceptable to step forward or put your foot down when delivering a smashing good point, but don’t overdo it.
10. **Use as few notes as possible:** With presentation, eye contact and gestures are among the two things I would recommend you get down right to score maximum points on. For the latter, this tip works wonders. You don’t want to be staring at a computer screen or notebook the whole 4 minutes of your debate reading off some script. Just take a few notecards with you with bullet points on them. Glance at them from time to time to help trigger your thoughts and get your points right. I find that only writing the points and the facts to back them up are enough to get you above a 6 on the presentation scoring (provided you do everything else in presentation correctly). Even better, memorize everything and go in with nothing (not recommended for beginner debaters). Then you have both your hands free to gesticulate the quality of your points.
11. **Speak with variation and volume:** Again, how you deliver your debate is very crucial if you wish to have another medal hung around your neck. Speak with varying amounts of tone, volume and speed. Slow down and repeat points or key pieces of evidence so it sinks in to the adjudicator and opponent team. Raise your voice when concluding the debate, finishing your point or slamming down a rebuttal. The room is your voice’s to dominate for those 4 minutes, so how you dominate it is key to success. No one will remember a person who speaks too fast and gives their points in a monotonous voice.
12. **Offense in the right amount:** While I commend being a little arrogant to the enemy team while delivering your debate, I condemn outright insulting of the enemy team. Chances are the adjudicator will too and possibly mark you down for that. Don’t get too tied down trying to make the enemy team look dumb or

their points hollow, mention it but then move on. It's best to be arrogant after you've delivered your points or given an excellent rebuttal. Then you deserve to say that the points of the enemy team were "hollow, shaky and weak" or any other negative terms you wish to use.

13. **Make time your ally, not your enemy:** Remember, you've got 4 minutes to speak. That's actually quite a bit of time to say quite a few things. But that doesn't mean you make your introduction and conclusion super long just to fill up time. I've seen debaters whose introduction and conclusion alone take up 3/4 of their debating time (and even then they struggle to reach 3 minutes). Points and rebuttals should take up most of your time, especially if you're second or third speaker (as further explained below). I tend to divide my time in this way: introduction (recap of teams points) 15-30 seconds, rebuttals 30 seconds - 1.5 minutes, points (with data) 1-2 minutes, conclusion 15-30 seconds. If you can't divide the time that effectively (don't worry, it took me a few tries to nail it), then take the 3-minute signal for granted. If the adjudicator has banged on the table, you should ideally already be rolling through your points but not concluding them yet.
14. **Be specific with feedback:** Remember, your team is also scored on feedback (though I'm not sure if it'll count towards your final score. Don't just give general feedback along the lines of "You were good at projecting your voice but you could have improved your points by adding more facts". Give specific examples where they could benefit from adding more facts, actually mention the points or times where they could've used more facts. The more specific your feedback is, the more the opponent team has to improve on.
15. **Teamwork makes the dream work:** (insert cringe or meme here). Anyways, your team chemistry actually plays a part in increasing your chances of placing in the awards or even being included in the debate showcase. In the 15 minutes of preparation time, talk with your teammates, pass notes around and share facts on screens. While the debate is going on, quietly write a few notes for rebuttals or point construction on a note card and slip it to your teammates. In the minute between speakers, quickly explain rebuttals and points and share any last-minute facts. The more the adjudicator sees your team coordinate, the higher they'll score you on teamwork.
16. **Abandon all hope ye who commit fallacies:** In preparation for debates, both during and before competitions, I recommend you brush up on the list of logical fallacies. If you commit a logical fallacy in a debate against a group who knows their fallacies, congrats, you just put your entire argument in jeopardy of being smashed. Before you give your points and while you're preparing them, ask every member in your team to read over it for any logical fallacies, that way you can fix them and avoid a catastrophic defeat. Likewise, by familiarizing yourself with the fallacies, you can call out speakers of the opposition if they make one.